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Enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report has been prepared in response to a request made by the General Assembly in its resolution 50/185 of 22 December 1995. The purpose of the report is to present the progress to date in the implementation of resolutions 49/190 and 50/185, in particular to report on the status of requests from Member States for electoral assistance and verification, and on the efforts of the Secretary-General to enhance the Organization's support of the democratization process in Member States.

2. The information provided in the present report is divided into three sections: (a) implementation of General Assembly resolutions 49/190 and 50/185; (b) United Nations experience in electoral assistance over the past two years; and (c) reflections on future activities. Additional details of specific assistance projects between 18 October 1995 and 16 September 1997 are contained in the annex.

3. Over the past two years, the United Nations has continued to receive a significant number of requests from Member States for electoral assistance. However, as more Member States have passed through the initial phase of first-time multi-party elections, the focus is shifting away from the specific events surrounding election day to the consolidation of institutions and processes which are essential to viable democracies. That trend was first identified two years ago and has become increasingly pronounced.

4. As electoral assistance has taken on new dimensions, additional organizations and institutions have begun to offer advice and expertise. The coordination and complementarity of their activities is therefore of increased importance. The United Nations has consistently sought to encourage national capacity-building in its assistance projects, and with more partners engaged in electoral assistance, the prospects for creating sustainable independent electoral systems have been greatly enhanced.

II. IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS 49/190 AND 50/185

A. Consolidation of electoral assistance capacities and coordination of activities

5. The Secretary-General has appointed Mr. Kieran Prendergast, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to serve as the United Nations focal point for electoral assistance activities. All requests for electoral assistance will be forwarded to the focal point for review. As in the past, the focal point will consider each request and advise the Secretary-General on an appropriate response. The focal point is assisted in that task by the Electoral Assistance Division, Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat.

6. Requests for electoral assistance have continued at a high level, with the majority of such requests being for technical assistance. Over the past two years, electoral missions have been conducted in the context of only two

peacekeeping operations: the United Nations Transitional Administration in Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES) and the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL). That experience confirms the trend identified in the previous report (A/50/736), which suggested that the number of large-scale observation missions would decline over time, while the need for specific technical assistance projects would increase.

7. Cooperation within the United Nations system has expanded, and important initiatives have been taken by several organizations and agencies. Primary partners include the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Department for Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. UNDP, particularly its Management Development and Governance Division, has undertaken research and pilot testing in specific areas in order to develop effective methods for larger field projects. UNDP has sponsored some 25 workshops on issues of governance and democratization in various regions, and hosted an international conference on governance for sustainable growth and equity at its headquarters in July 1997. The conference was attended by over 1,200 parliamentarians, mayors, national and local government officials, and representatives of civil society organizations, bilateral donors and United Nations agencies. In the field, UNDP has continued to provide important technical assistance to national electoral commissions; most notable is its continuing support for electoral processes in Haiti. The ongoing cooperation established earlier between the United Nations system and the Organization of American States (OAS) has provided a useful example of coordinated international support.

8. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, as part of its efforts to improve the efficiency of public institutions and administrative procedures, has continued to focus on strengthening governmental capacity to conduct electoral processes, with a strong emphasis on sustainability and cost considerations. In addition to a large-scale study on election administration and cost, studies are being conducted on "best practices" in the electoral field. During the past biennium, the Department has provided advisory services and project support to Brazil, El Salvador, the Gambia, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mexico, Mozambique, Nicaragua, the Niger, Sierra Leone and Uganda. The resulting experience provides the basis for identifying new, effective responses to changing requirements. Analytical studies will address the impact of new technologies and their policy implications.

9. United Nations Volunteers (UNVs) have provided professional assistance in difficult and often complex situations. Most recently, UNVs served as the core electoral field staff for UNTAES, advising local election authorities on critical aspects of the electoral process. UNVs also played a significant role in the observation of the Liberian elections. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) continues to provide expert advisory services, particularly in legal analysis and legislative assistance with regard to electoral laws and related legislation. OHCHR also provides support for civic education efforts, training of public officials with key roles in elections and needs assessments. The United Nations Office for Project Services (OPS) has demonstrated its effectiveness as an executing agency, and offers a variety of administrative management support services, including project

management, recruitment of project staff, equipment procurement and administration of training programmes.

10. As a parallel project to the UNDP/Electoral Assistance Division 1997 election project in Mexico, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) collaborated with Mexico's Federal Electoral Institute in organizing elections on the rights of the child for children aged 6 to 12. The project was an effective instrument of civic education for both children and their parents, and provided unique information to Mexican educators concerning student values and attitudes throughout the country. The positive experience with the children's elections project in Mexico may serve as a basis for undertaking similar projects in other countries.

11. Over the past two years, several technical manuals and guidelines have been prepared by the Electoral Assistance Division and finalized for the use of relevant United Nations organizations, agencies and consultants, including revised guidelines for electoral assistance; a manual for missions requiring the coordination and support of international election observers; and guidelines for the conduct of technical needs assessment missions. Additional handbooks and manuals are planned.

B. Coordination with other organizations

12. The United Nations has continued to strengthen coordination with other organizations, and has taken several initiatives to establish greater cooperation in the field and at Headquarters. Those efforts have been aided by the recent proliferation of organizations interested in and capable of providing electoral assistance or support. Collaboration among such organizations frequently results in better assistance to the requesting Government at lesser cost to the individual assistance providers. The examples set out below of such collaboration over the past reporting period provide concrete evidence of the overall benefits to be derived from greater international consultation and cooperation.

13. In March and April 1997, the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) provided UNTAES with supplemental experts in civic education, training and information systems analysis. International observers for the election were sponsored by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The work undertaken by those experts was essential to the effectiveness of UNTAES, particularly given the complexity of the preparations for the election and the severe time constraints under which UNTAES carried out its mandate.

14. In Liberia, United Nations election observers were complemented by observers provided by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In addition to UNDP, technical assistance was also provided by the European Union, the Carter Center and IFES. Those organizations also observed the electoral process in its entirety. The contributions of each organization resulted in enhanced technical assistance, increased observer coverage of the country, and improved assessment of the process through information-sharing on the preparations for and conduct of the elections. The participation of the two regional organizations in support of

the Liberian electoral process was also welcomed as an appropriate regional response. In a more general context, OAU has held discussions with the United Nations in order to strengthen cooperation on the conduct of specific missions, information-sharing and the identification of experts.

15. An innovative partnership was continued in Mexico in early 1997, where the Electoral Assistance Division and UNDP collaborated with the Federal Electoral Institute of Mexico and the Autonomous National University of Mexico in organizing a series of seminars on aspects of election observation. The latest phase of the project is the development of an interactive, CD-ROM-based manual for election observation. The manual is designed to assist both domestic and international election observer groups worldwide in planning and implementing observation activities. An international workshop on electoral observation methodology was held in Mexico from 14 to 16 August 1997 in order for the project partners to discuss the basic design and contents of the proposed manual.

16. At Headquarters, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has signed an agreement with IFES and the International Institute for Democracy and Election Assistance (IDEA) to carry out a joint study of the administration and cost of elections. The purpose of the project is to collect and make available practical information on the organization and conduct of elections that can be consulted by election administrators worldwide. An important component of the project is the production of a comprehensive and user-friendly CD-ROM encyclopedia of election management that can be consulted by election administrators. Among the topics that will be addressed are legislative frameworks, boundary delimitation, voter registration, vote counting, and the regulation of parties and candidates. Those and other issues will be covered with a summary of collected "good practices" and a discussion of alternative frameworks and/or procedures that might be used or adapted effectively for implementation in other countries. A pilot study has already been completed, and each of the three partner organizations has begun the activities for which it is responsible. Additional collaborative projects, involving UNDP, the Electoral Assistance Division and International IDEA, are currently under discussion.

17. In December 1996, the Electoral Assistance Division, together with UNHCR and IFES, provided funding for a study entitled "Refugee and internally displaced persons' participation in the upcoming Liberian elections". The study was prepared by the Refugee Policy Group, a Washington, D.C.-based centre for policy analysis and research on refugee issues. The study had two objectives: (a) to identify and analyse existing challenges to the participation of potential refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the July 1997 Liberian elections, and (b) to identify and compare successes and failures in enabling refugee/IDP participation. The first half of the report was submitted for consideration prior to the Liberian elections, and the second half will be finalized by the end of 1997.

18. The Association of African Election Authorities, established as one result of a November 1994 colloquium on African election administration (see A/49/675, annex II), held its founding meeting at Kampala from 14 to 16 January 1997. Participants at the meeting discussed a draft of the Association's charter, the

election of its officials, future organizational tasks and programme activities, and sources of funding. The meeting was supported by IFES through the United States Agency for International Development, and by the Electoral Assistance Division.

C. Ongoing activities

19. The Electoral Assistance Division continues to maintain a roster of elections experts, as requested in General Assembly resolution 46/137. In view of the changing needs for such experts, efforts have been made to expand the roster and to subject proposed candidates to methodical screening and evaluation in order to ensure their expertise and suitability as potential United Nations consultants. Most recently, the Electoral Assistance Division contacted a variety of national electoral commissions in order to seek recommendations of viable candidates from their countries.

20. As of 31 December 1996, the balance of the Trust Fund for Electoral Observation, including both general and earmarked contributions, totalled $1,364,262. However, a high proportion of those funds have been earmarked for specific projects.

21. As indicated in the previous report of the Secretary-General (A/50/736), the Electoral Assistance Division had planned a series of technical papers and the preparation of several operational manuals. As a first step, the Division organized an international round table on coordination and support missions in February 1996 in order to bring together experts in the field to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of that form of electoral assistance. The discussions provided a basis for the preparation of a field manual on coordination and support missions, which was reviewed by the round table participants and has since been introduced in the field as a standard reference for the implementation of coordination and support missions.

22. A manual on the conduct of needs assessment missions has also been prepared and reviewed, together with UNDP and other relevant agencies. That manual will be introduced for actual field use in the near future. At the same time, the established guidelines for electoral assistance have been subject to further review and adaptation with UNDP in order to ensure their continuing usefulness as the need for electoral assistance evolves.

23. Since the creation of the Electoral Assistance Division in 1992, the United Nations has acquired significant experience in the provision of electoral assistance in the context of peacekeeping missions. In an effort to evaluate such experience and improve upon past performance in the future, the Electoral Assistance Division and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations have held initial discussions on a potential "lessons learned" project to examine electoral assistance experience in the context of United Nations peacekeeping missions. That project is designed to identify strengths and weaknesses in the past and to assist the Organization in improving upon its performance in future peacekeeping missions.

24. Since its creation, the Electoral Assistance Division has prepared a monthly survey of electoral assistance activities, entitled "Electoral assistance activities of the United Nations system". The survey is compiled regularly into an annual report, and is available from the Electoral Assistance Division on request.

III. UNITED NATIONS EXPERIENCE

A. Major United Nations missions

25. In the past two years, the United Nations provided electoral assistance in the context of two peacekeeping operations: UNTAES and UNOMIL. As noted above, United Nations efforts were complemented in both cases with assistance provided by the relevant regional organizations (OSCE, OAU and ECOWAS).

26. The Electoral Unit of UNTAES was established at the end of September 1996 in order to carry out the UNTAES mandate of assisting the competent local authorities in the conduct of elections for all local government bodies. UNTAES field electoral officers laid much of the groundwork for the elections prior to the establishment of the local electoral commissions, and served as expert advisers to the Commission members. Elections for 28 municipal and city councils in the UNTAES-administered region were held simultaneously, with nationwide local elections on 13 April 1997. The official election results were announced on 30 April 1997 and certified by the Transitional Administrator on 6 May 1997. Following the announcement by the Government of Croatia that presidential elections would take place on 15 June 1997, UNTAES continued to provide technical assistance and logistic support to the electoral authorities, and mobilized UNTAES monitors to observe the presidential elections. Having completed its electoral mandate, the Electoral Unit of UNTAES was closed on 30 June 1997.

27. The Liberian presidential and legislative elections took place on 19 July 1997, and UNOMIL deployed over 300 international observers in carrying out its verification mandate. UNDP resumed its provision of technical assistance to the electoral commission, beginning in March 1997. Although some 33 medium-term observers began to arrive in mid-April 1997, the registration process did not take place until the end of June 1997. Their early presence, however, allowed the UNOMIL electoral office to follow and assess the entire electoral process in a comprehensive manner. The majority of observers arrived approximately one week before the election and departed within a few days of the announcement of the election results. In addition to the international observation, the UNOMIL electoral unit conducted a quick count that confirmed the official election results (for additional details on UNOMIL activities for the election, see S/1997/643).

B. Support for international observers

28. Since October 1995, the United Nations has coordinated international observers for elections in Algeria, Azerbaijan, Chad, the Comoros, Kyrgyzstan, Mali, Sierra Leone and the United Republic of Tanzania. Most recently, the

United Nations has begun to provide more strictly logistical support in deploying short-term international observers sponsored by Member States around the time of election day. That represents an adaptation of the standard coordination and support mission, which entails support for a comprehensive and long-term observation, beginning with registration and continuing through the campaign, election day and the announcement of the election results.

C. Technical assistance and advisory services

29. Since 18 October 1995, the United Nations has received an increasing number of requests for technical assistance and advisory services. Advice and assistance were provided to some 17 Member States on such issues as election organization and budgets, procurement, electoral laws, registration, training, computerization and comparative electoral systems. Technical assistance is most often provided through the Electoral Assistance Division, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNDP and OHCHR, depending upon the type of assistance required.

30. The demand for technical assistance has increased because the majority of requesting States have moved from the conduct of first-time or transitional elections to the organization of second and third-time elections. As was noted in the previous report, technical assistance is generally cost-effective and short-term, oriented towards increasing expertise on a specific component of election organization. That trend is essentially positive, demonstrating the progress being made by many Member States in identifying weaknesses in their existing election systems and seeking assistance to strengthen their capabilities in organizing and administering regular elections.

D. Follow and report

31. Although the United Nations has occasionally provided one or two observers for limited short-term observations, that mode of electoral assistance has been found to have limited value. The dispatch of such observers and the preparation of an internal report entail both financial and personnel costs to the Organization, without bringing tangible benefit to the requesting country. As a result, that form of assistance should be authorized only in special cases. More discussion of that form of assistance can be found in an earlier report of the Secretary-General on that issue (A/49/675).

IV. REFLECTIONS FOR FUTURE ACTIVITY

32. The initial wave of first-time democratic elections in many Member States has passed. Today, there are comparatively few conflict situations which call for elections as a component of the peacemaking process. As a result, emphasis must now be placed on the sustainability of the electoral process, and on assisting electoral administrators to plan and conduct elections efficiently and with cost-effectiveness. The increased self-sufficiency of election administrations will also contribute to the credibility of the process, which should alleviate the earlier perceived need for international election

observers. The creation of permanent electoral institutions and the enhanced credibility of the electoral process are essential elements in creating sustainable electoral systems.

33. In response to the changing needs of the Member States, the United Nations must develop new forms of assistance which provide an effective response. The forms of assistance routinely provided in the past need to be reassessed and adapted to suit the more specific demands of increasingly well-informed and capable electoral administrators. Election observation, which is perhaps the most familiar form of international assistance, may not be as relevant as other forms of assistance. Needs assessment missions must engage representatives of requesting Governments in an active dialogue to determine the most pressing needs and the most effective forms of assistance to be provided. The United Nations, in particular the Electoral Assistance Division, needs to be prepared to backstop field projects over longer periods of time and with greater attention to specific results and resulting additional needs.

34. Although United Nations electoral assistance has been consistently oriented towards the building of national capacity, more attention must be directed towards ensuring that all aspects of election organization and administration are supported domestically. Indigenous capacity-building is important not only in terms of expertise but in the procurement of election materials. In the past, procurement has often entailed purchases from abroad as a result of time pressures and/or donor facilitation. However, an election administration must be able to organize and conduct later elections without the need for any form of international intervention. Progress towards indigenous capacity-building has been real and measurable, but elections will not be sustainable until dependence on outside assistance has been eliminated - whether for organizational expertise, financial support or physical procurement of elections materials.

35. The United Nations has assisted a significant number of countries in moving from first time multi-party elections to planning their second and third generations of elections. As those countries move forward, however, the Organization must also move ahead, seeking always to identify new modalities for serving its Member States effectively. The compilation and sharing of information and data on elections and their administration is an important new service which the United Nations is working to provide. New forms of direct assistance also need to be developed, but the United Nations remains committed to assisting Member States until external support is no longer required.

Annex

STATUS OF REQUESTS FOR ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE AS OF 16 SEPTEMBER 1997

Based on information received as of 16 September 1997, a summary of the electoral assistance activities of the United Nations between 18 October 1995 and 16 September 1997 is provided below, arranged alphabetically by country. The type of assistance provided is indicated in parenthesis.[a]

Albania

On 10 June 1996, the Secretary-General received a letter from the Permanent Mission of Albania to the United Nations inviting the United Nations to send observers for the rerun of elections in some electoral districts scheduled for 16 June 1996. Due to the short notice, the United Nations declined the invitation.

Algeria

In November 1995, the Secretary-General sent a team of seven observers to observe the final stages of the electoral campaign and election day. The observers remained in the country for approximately 12 days, and submitted an internal report to the Secretary-General after completing the mission (follow and report).

In February 1997, the Government of Algeria invited the Secretary-General to send observers to follow the Parliamentary elections held on 5 June 1997. In response to the request, the United Nations sent an evaluation mission to Algeria in March 1997. Based on the mission's findings, the United Nations sent a Coordinator to the country in April 1997 to coordinate and support the activities of some 100 international observers provided by Member States (coordination and support).

Armenia

In July 1996, the President of the Central Electoral Commission of Armenia invited the Secretary-General to send United Nations observers to the Presidential elections held on 22 September 1996, and requested the United Nations Resident Coordinator to coordinate the activities of United Nations agencies and other international organizations providing assistance to the electoral process. The invitation was declined due to insufficient lead time, which is necessary for a comprehensive observation of the electoral process.

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[a] For definitions of the seven different types of possible United Nations responses to requests for electoral assistance, see A/49/675, annex II.

Azerbaijan

Following a request from the Government (received in June 1995), the OSCE/United Nations Joint Electoral Observation Mission in Azerbaijan was established to coordinate the activities of international observers present for the Parliamentary elections held on 12 and 26 November 1995. More than 100 international observers from 25 countries were deployed during the first round, and over 20 international observers during the second round. A comprehensive report was later submitted as an OSCE/United Nations document (coordination and support).

Bangladesh

In May 1996, the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh sent a letter to the Secretary-General requesting United Nations technical assistance for the elections held on 12 June 1996. Accordingly, under UNDP project BGD/96/011, "Support to the electoral process of 1996", a Chief Technical Adviser was sent to the country to assist the electoral authorities. After the election, the expert remained in the country until the end of July 1996 to assist in the preparation of a UNDP project document entitled "Recommendations for future democratic elections in Bangladesh" (technical).

Benin

On 14 February 1996, the Government of Benin requested the United Nations to send observers to the Presidential elections held on 3 March 1996. The United Nations replied that due to the lack of lead time it was not in a position to send observers.

Brazil

Under the provisions of UNDP project BRA/93/035, a mission, composed of an electoral adviser provided by the former Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat, an electronic voting specialist and a consultant in electoral administration with experience implementing electronic voting systems, travelled to Brazil in November 1995 to advise the electoral authorities on the procurement of voting machines and the implementation of a nationwide system of electronic voting. The mission submitted a report (technical).

Burkina Faso

Following a request from the Government in August 1996 for United Nations assistance in organizing Legislative and Presidential elections scheduled for April 1997 and December 1998, respectively, the United Nations sent a needs assessment mission in February 1997. As a result, under the provisions of a UNDP technical assistance project, the United Nations provided assistance to the electoral authorities, mainly in the area of training (technical).

In addition, the United Nations declined a request for observers for the Presidential elections received through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees due to insufficient lead time.

Cambodia

In May 1996, the Government sent a letter to the UNDP Resident Representative requesting electoral assistance for the elections scheduled for 1998. Following a visit by the Director of the East Asia and Pacific Division of the Department of Political Affairs in June 1996, and a needs assessment mission headed by the Assistant Secretary-General of the Department and composed of a senior officer of the Electoral Assistance Division and a consultant, which was conducted in August 1996, a report was submitted containing several recommendations regarding possible United Nations technical assistance. Based on the report and a subsequent request by both the Government and the UNDP Resident Representative, the United Nations sent an electoral consultant in August 1997 to provide technical assistance to the electoral authorities in preparation for the elections (technical).

Cape Verde

On 27 November 1995. the Government sent a request to UNDP for financial assistance for the organization of the municipal elections scheduled for 21 January 1996. In addition, Legislative and Presidential elections were scheduled for 17 December 1995 and 18 February 1996, respectively. In December 1995, the Electoral Assistance Division informed the Resident Representative in the country that the United Nations was not in a position to provide financial or material assistance from the United Nations Trust Fund for Electoral Observation.

Chad

During 1995 and 1996, the United Nations provided technical assistance to the electoral authorities through UNDP project CHD/95/004, implemented by OPS. In addition, following a request received in February 1996 from the Government of Chad for observers, the United Nations conducted a needs assessment mission in April 1996, which recommended the coordination of international observers. Accordingly, the Acting Director of the Electoral Assistance Division was involved in assisting with the coordination of the activities of international observers present during the first round of Presidential elections on 2 June 1996 and the second round on 3 July 1996 (technical, and coordination and support).

Comoros

In October 1995, the Secretary-General received a letter from the Transitional Government of National Unity of the Comoros, requesting electoral assistance for the Presidential elections. Following the request, in

November 1995 the United Nations sent an electoral consultant to conduct a needs assessment mission. The consultant then prepared a project document for UNDP project COI/95/007, and was recruited to perform the functions of Chief Technical Adviser of that project (technical).

In addition, the Deputy Director of the Electoral Assistance Division travelled to the country at the beginning of March 1996 to coordinate the activities of international observers present during the first round of Presidential elections held on 6 March 1996. The second round was held on 16 March 1996 (coordination and support).

Subsequently, following another request received in May 1996 for assistance in the preparation of the constitutional referendum held on 20 October 1996 and the Legislative elections on 1 December 1996, the United Nations provided further technical assistance (technical).

In a separate request received in November 1996, the Government of the Comoros invited the United Nations to send observers to follow the Legislative elections scheduled for 1 and 8 December 1996. Due to insufficient lead time, the United Nations replied that it was not in a position to send observers.

Congo

In March 1997, the Government of the Congo sent a request to the United Nations, through the UNDP Resident Representative, for technical and material assistance for the Presidential elections scheduled to take place in July/August 1997. Subsequently, in May 1997, a request for observers was received. Following a needs assessment conducted by the Electoral Assistance Division in May 1997 and due to the political situation in the country, the United Nations declined the request.

Côte d'Ivoire

Following a request from the Government (April 1995), the United Nations sent a consultant to the country at the end of September 1995 to coordinate international observers for the Presidential elections held on 22 October 1995, and for the Legislative elections held on 26 November 1995. An internal report was submitted subsequently (coordination and support).

Croatia, Eastern Slavonia

On 15 January 1996, the Security Council adopted resolution 1037, in which it established the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES), for an initial period of 12 months. One of the mandates given to the civilian component of UNTAES was to organize elections and assist in their conduct, and to certify the results. The electoral component of UNTAES was established in November 1996, and the elections took place on 13 April 1997 (for more detail, see S/1996/622, S/1996/705, S/1996/883, S/1997/148 and S/1997/487) (supervision).

Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire)

On 17 May 1996, the Government of former Zaire requested the Secretary-General to provide technical assistance for the elections then scheduled for July 1997. Following two separate needs assessment missions in June and July 1996, the Secretary-General agreed to provide assistance to the National Electoral Commission, through UNDP project ZAI/96/010, implemented by OPS. In addition, a United Nations Electoral Assistance Unit was established in September 1996 to follow the developments in the country and assess the possibility of further United Nations involvement. However, due to political developments in former Zaire, the technical project was suspended in April 1997, and the Electoral Assistance Unit at Kinshasa was closed in early May 1997 (technical).

Dominican Republic

On 30 April 1996, the Junta Central Electoral sent a letter to the Secretary-General inviting United Nations observers for the Presidential elections held on 16 May 1996. Due to insufficient lead time, the United Nations declined the invitation.

El Salvador

The United Nations received two separate requests from El Salvador for observers for the elections held on March 1997. The United Nations informed the Government that it was not in a position to send observers to the elections.

Equatorial Guinea

On 25 January 1996, the UNDP offices in Equatorial Guinea received a request from the Government inviting the United Nations to send observers to the Presidential elections scheduled for 25 February. The United Nations replied that due to the lack of lead time it would not be possible to organize an effective observation mission.

Fiji

Following a request from the Chairman of the Fiji Constitution Review Commission (July 1995) for assistance in identifying experts on electoral systems and methods of power sharing in multi-ethnic societies, and for possible financial support, the United Nations recommended five experts to prepare papers, to be funded by the United Nations. The papers were submitted to the Commission in December 1995 (technical).

Gabon

Following a request from the Government (May 1995) and after a needs assessment mission (July 1995), the United Nations provided a consultant in training to assist the Electoral Commission in preparing the elections held on 15 and 29 December 1996 (technical).

Gambia

Following a request from the Government (April 1995), the United Nations provided technical assistance to the electoral authorities from 1995 to February 1997, in preparation of the Presidential elections held on 26 September 1996 and Parliamentary on 2 January 1997 (technical).

In addition, the United Nations declined a request received in September 1996 for observers for the Presidential elections due to insufficient lead time and absence of enabling environment.

Ghana

On 2 September 1996, the Government sent an invitation for the United Nations to observe the Presidential and Parliamentary elections held on 7 December 1996. Accordingly, under the provisions of UNDP project GHA/96/004/A/01/01, implemented by the former Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat, a staff member from the Department travelled to the country to assist in the preparation of a project document, and a consultant was fielded to assist the National Electoral Commission in organizing the elections. In addition, two United Nations officers travelled to the country in early December to follow the last phase of the electoral process and prepare an internal report (technical and follow and report).

Guyana

On 27 February 1996, the Chairman of the Electoral Commission requested the United Nations to send a technical mission to Guyana in order to assess the needs of the Commission in connection with the general elections scheduled to take place in 1997. Accordingly, an officer from the Electoral Assistance Division travelled to the country to assess the technical requirements of the Commission, and to recommend a plan of action and time-frame for the general elections. A mission report was submitted. As recommended by the Electoral Assistance Division, an officer from the former Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat, subsequently prepared a detailed budget proposal for consideration by the donor community. Since July 1996, the United Nations has been providing technical assistance to the electoral authorities, through UNDP project GUY/96/001 (technical).

Haiti

The United Nations continued to provide technical assistance to the electoral authorities in Haiti throughout 1996 until June 1997. The Presidential elections were held on 17 December 1995, and on 6 April 1997, elections took place to elect one third of the Senate, the members of the communal section assemblies and 2 members of the National Assembly (technical).

Kyrgyzstan

In October 1995, the Government requested United Nations assistance for the Presidential elections held on 24 December 1995. Accordingly, the United Nations sent a consultant to conduct a needs assessment mission and to write a proposal for an umbrella project. A UNDP project was prepared, to be implemented by OPS, and a consultant was sent to provide assistance to the Electoral Commission, and - together with OSCE - to establish a Joint Electoral Observation Mission to coordinate the activities of international observers. The Presidential elections were held on 24 December 1995, and the Joint Mission presented a report (technical, and coordination and support).

Lesotho

On 12 June 1997, the Government of Lesotho requested United Nations electoral assistance for the organization of the Parliamentary elections scheduled for May 1998. Accordingly, an officer from the Electoral Assistance Division conducted a mission to assess the possibility of United Nations involvement, and submitted a report to the Focal Point for Electoral Assistance. The United Nations is considering providing technical assistance to the electoral authorities (technical).

Liberia

During 1996, the United Nations retained an Electoral Officer in the electoral component of UNOMIL to follow the preparatory phases of the electoral process and to advise the SRSG on electoral issues. Regarding technical assistance, UNDP project LIR/92/001, implemented by the former Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat, was briefly in operation between March and April 1996, when it was discontinued due to the political developments in the country. Subsequently, in accordance with the revived Abuja Accords, the Presidential and Legislative elections in Liberia were rescheduled to take place in May 1997, and in October 1996 the Government of Liberia sent a letter to the Secretary-General requesting the United Nations to send a technical survey team to conduct a study, in collaboration with the National Elections Commission of Liberia, for the holding of general elections. The mission was conducted in December 1996 and submitted a report. The UNDP technical assistance project reopened in the beginning of 1997, and the electoral component of UNOMIL began deployment March 1997. The elections were held on 19 July 1997 (for greater detail, see S/1997/643) (verfication and technical).

Madagascar

Following a request from the Government, in October 1996 the United Nations sent two staff members to follow the last phase of the electoral process leading to the Presidential elections on 3 November 1996. The officers submitted an internal report upon completion of the mission (follow and report).

Mali

In January 1997, the Government sent a letter to the Secretary-General requesting assistance for the electoral process scheduled for 1997. Following a needs assessment conducted by the Electoral Assistance Division in February 1997, the United Nations sent consultants on training, vote counting and coordination of observers in March 1997, under the provisions of UNDP project MLI/97/002. The Legislative elections were held on 13 April 1997 but were subsequently annulled due to serious problems with the conduct of the elections. Presidential elections were held on 11 May 1997, and Legislative elections on 20 July and 3 August 1997 (technical, and coordination and support).

Mexico

During 1996, the United Nations continued to provide electoral assistance to the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE), under the provisions of UNDP project MEX/94/001, implemented by OPS. The Electoral Assistance Division conducted two missions to Mexico in 1996 in order to prepare a series of activities to be undertaken jointly by the Division and IFE during 1996 and 1997. The plan included training seminars, the preparation of manuals on electoral observation, and comprehensive studies on the Mexican electoral system (technical).

In addition, in May 1997 UNDP project MEX/97/005/A/01/99 was created to provide financial support to national organizations that observed the electoral process culminating in the 6 July 1997 elections for the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The project was coordinated by an officer of the Electoral Assistance Division (technical).

Niger

Following a request for electoral assistance from the Government received in March 1996, the United Nations sent a needs assessment mission to the Niger, led by the Acting Director of the Electoral Assistance Division, which submitted a report, including recommendations. Under an already existing UNDP project NER/94/007, implemented by the former Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations provided further technical assistance to the National Electoral Commission. In addition, in June 1996 the Government requested the United Nations to coordinate the activities of international observers present during the Presidential elections held on 7 July (1st round) and 28 July 1996 (2nd round). Due to the short notice, the Organization was not able to respond positively. However,

UNDP provided limited logistical assistance to international observers (technical).

Pakistan

In January 1997, the Government requested the Secretary-General to send observers for the General Elections scheduled for 3 February 1997. The United Nations answered that due to the short lead time it was not in a position to send observers.

Panama

The United Nations continued to provide technical assistance to the electoral authorities until February 1996, under the provisions of UNDP project PAN/93/006 (technical).

Republic of Moldova

On 2 October 1996, the United Nations Centre for Human Rights received a request from the Government of the Republic of Moldova to observe the Presidential elections on 17 November 1996. The Centre replied to the Government that the request should have been addressed to the United Nations Focal Point for Electoral Assistance, and that assistance on human rights would not be possible due to insufficient lead time.

Romania

In 1996, the United Nations received two requests from the Permanent Mission of Romania to the United Nations for United Nations observers. The first was in May 1996 in connection with the local elections held on 2 June 1996, and the second in September 1996 for the Presidential and Parliamentary elections held on 3 November 1996. In both cases, due to the short notice, the United Nations was not in a position to send observers.

Sao Tome and Principe

In June 1996, the Government of Sao Tome and Principe sent a letter to the Secretary-General inviting observers for the Presidential elections scheduled for 30 June 1996. The United Nations replied that due to the short lead time and the lack of financial resources it was not in a position to send observers.

Sierra Leone

Based on an earlier request in March 1994, the United Nations began providing technical assistance to the electoral authorities of Sierra Leone in 1995, under the provisions of UNDP project SIL/95/003, implemented by the former

Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat. In addition to technical assistance, in January 1996 the United Nations established a small secretariat to coordinate the activities of international observers present during the final phase of the electoral process. Presidential and Parliamentary elections were held on 26 February and 15 March 1996 (technical, and coordination and support).

Sudan

In January 1996, the Secretary-General received a letter from the Government of the Sudan inviting the United Nations to send observers to the Presidential and Parliamentary elections held on 6 and 17 March 1996. Accordingly, in February 1996 the United Nations conducted a needs assessment mission, led by the Acting Director of the Electoral Assistance Division, after which the Government was informed that the United Nations was not able to provide observers for the elections in the time available.

Uganda

Under the provisions of UNDP project UGA/95/003, initiated in 1995 and implemented by the former Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations provided technical assistance to the electoral authorities in Uganda for the preparation of the Presidential elections held on 9 May 1996 and Parliamentary elections on 27 June 1996 (technical).

In addition, following a further request from the Government in April 1996, the Secretary-General sent a United Nations delegation composed of two United Nations officers to follow the Presidential elections and to report to him on its conduct and outcome. The team also provided assistance to the international observers present during the polling period (follow and report).

United Republic of Tanzania

Following a request from the Government (June 1995), and under the provisions of UNDP project URT/95/006 implemented by the former Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations provided two consultants to assist in the coordination of the international observers present during the electoral process. Elections were held on 22 October 1995 in Zanzibar and 29 October in the entire country (coordination and support).

Yemen

In June 1996, the President of the Supreme Electoral Commission sent a request to the United Nations Resident Coordinator in the country for United Nations assistance in the preparation of the Parliamentary elections held on 27 April 1997. Following the recommendation of a needs assessment mission

conducted in October 1996, the United Nations sent an expert in December 1996 to provide technical assistance to the electoral authorities (technical).

In addition, following a request from the Government, the United Nations sent two officers from the Department of Political Affairs to follow the final phase of the electoral process and to report on its conduct and outcome (follow and report).

Zambia

In July 1996, the Secretary-General received a letter from the Government inviting United Nations observers for the Parliamentary and Presidential elections held on 18 November 1996. In response to the request, the United Nations sent two officers to follow the last phase of the electoral process and submit an internal report (follow and report).

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Palestinian elections

In December 1995, the Secretary-General received an invitation from the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in the observation of the Palestinian elections to be held on 20 January 1996. It should be noted that the agreement reached between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization designated the European Union as coordinator. In those circumstances, the United Nations, through UNRWA, provided some logistical support to the electoral process. United Nations observers did not participate.